

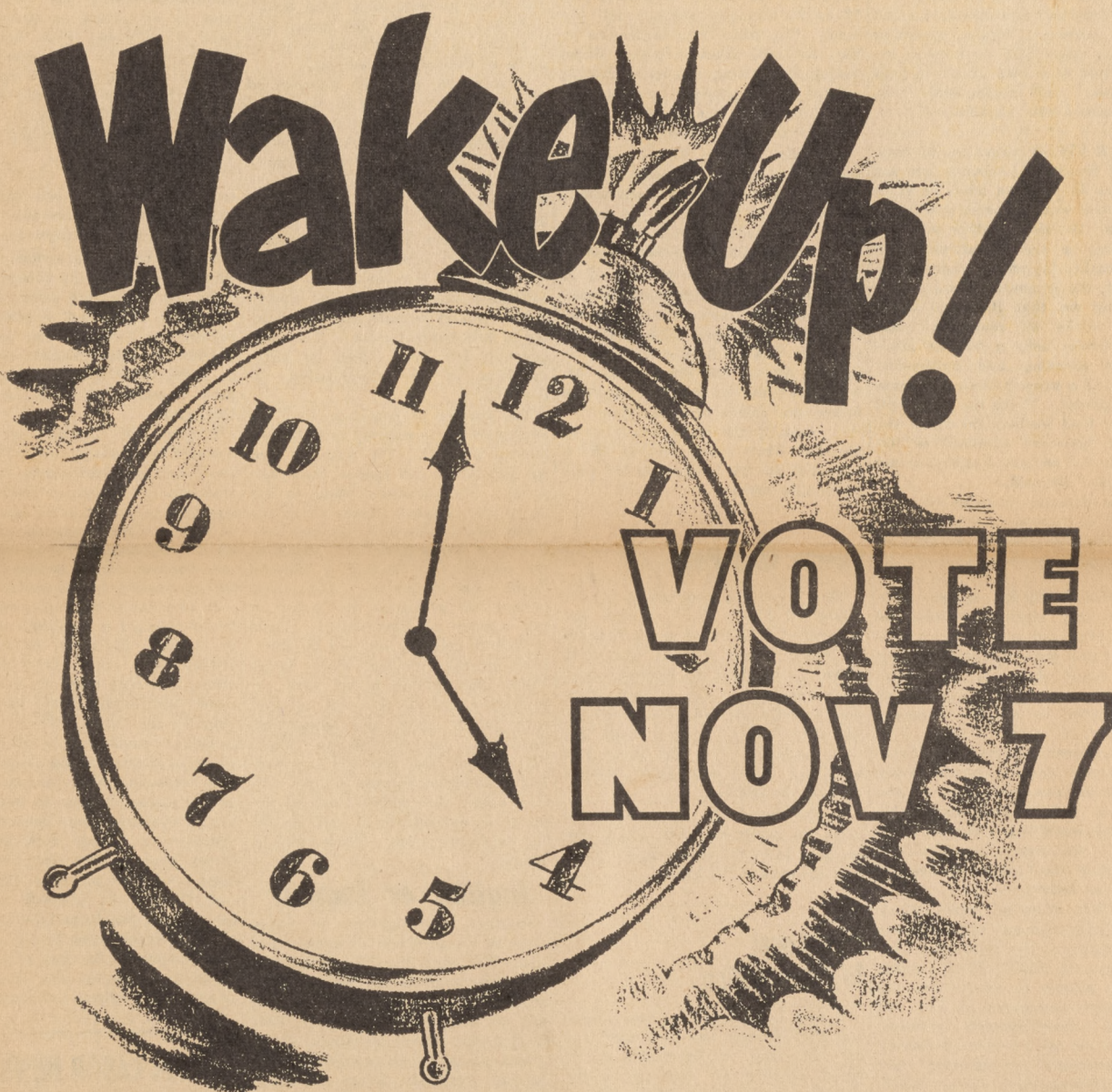
FARM LABOR NEWS

Vol. 5, No. 11



Washington, D. C., October, 1950

50 Cents Per Year



YOUR FUTURE IS AT STAKE !

Louisiana Sugar Cane Workers and Farmers Urged to Organize by Priest

Living wages for sugar field workers, who cannot "eke out even a sub-standard existence," was demanded by the Lafourche Social Action Committee in a petition to Congress and the Department of Agriculture.

The committee's statement, drafted by Rev. Jerome A. Drolet, executive secretary, urges field workers to organize "into their own unions to help themselves," and recommends that small farmers also organize.

SUGAR FIELD wages in the cane areas of Southern Louisiana are set by law at 32 cents an hour, or \$2.90 a day, when weather permits work in the fields. Working weather will thus allow only a sub-normal diet and rainy weather lay-offs further reduce that diet, the committee shows.

Pointing out that Hawaiian sugar workers make 80 cents an hour, Father Drolet asks a 65-cent minimum in planting and cultivating seasons and a proportionate minimum during harvest. "Even this raise will leave our field workers far below the accepted American standard of living wage for normal, healthy, sound family life," he said.

If it is necessary to raise the price of sugar to provide a more nearly human wage it should be done at once, the petition states.

FATHER DROLET states: "We know of some large processors and growers who have made large profits last year and have not paid the field workers more than the bare minimum; these companies had paid very large salaries to multiple company officials."

His statement declares: "The Catholic Church's teaching on the living wage is an essential part of the Gospel, as well as an indispensable part of the world battle against Communism." He quotes from the 1940 statement of the Catholic Bishops of America as follows:

"The first claim of labor, which takes priority over any claim of owners to profits, is the right to a Living Wage. A Living Wage means sufficient income to meet, not only the present necessities of life, but those of unemployment, sickness, death and old age as well. A Saving Wage constitutes an essential part of the definition of a Living Wage. . . . A Living Wage constitutes the first charge on industry."

Louisiana Dairy Plant Now in Operation

The milk cooling plant owned and operated by and for members of Locals 236 and 237 near Franklinton, La., opened for business October 2. While not yet running at full capacity, it is expected that the plant will handle a large part of the fluid milk produced and processed in the two

Cotton Strike Brings Higher Wage For Workers

With cotton selling at over 40c a pound and the corporation farmers of California paying only \$3.00 per 100 pounds, the Caravans began to roll in Fresno, Kern, Tulare, Kings and other cotton producing counties on October 5. Estimates were made that 12 to 20 thousand workers left the fields. The strike was sanctioned by the National Farm Labor Union Valley Organizing Council following refusal of the growers to meet with the Union after the State Conciliation Service had intervened.

The San Joaquin Valley was the scene of a strike of cotton pickers in 1949, when the growers cut wages an average of \$1 per day. A settlement was made after a two weeks strike and applied to 100,000 workers.

As the Farm Labor News goes to press the Valley Organizing Council is meeting to consider an offer by the growers to pay \$3.50 per 100 pounds. The workers originally demanded \$4 per 100 since it has always been the custom for wages to follow the prices received by growers. Usually the wage has been \$1 per 100 when cotton sold at 10c a pound, \$2 for 20c cotton and last year \$3 for 30c cotton.

Puerto Rico Pays

The Territorial legislature of the Island of Puerto Rico recently appropriated \$117,400 to assist families of Puerto Rican workers who were flown to Michigan to harvest sugar beets this year. The workers were paid so little and deductions from the pay they received were so high that they could not pay for their own keep, let alone help their families back in the island.

Puerto Rico is the most overcrowded place on earth and her people are too poor to be taxed to support sugar beet growers in Michigan.

New Local In Puerto Rico

A new Local Union of Sugar Cane and Mill Workers has been organized by Carl Lara in Ensenada, P. R., whose members are employed by the Guanica Central Sugar Mill. Officers of the Local 304 are Antonio Caraballo, President; Eugenio R. Sanchez, Vice President; Rafael Albino Gonzalez, Secretary; Alberto Vega Belan, Treasurer. Other charter members are Cumersindo Hernandez, Ramon Velez Toro, Fco Ayala Mercado, Ramon Devesus Vega, Nicolas Vasquez, Bidonio Pajon, Antonio Vega Cariano, David Casiano.

Parishes. I. Lee Parker reports many new applicants for membership in the Union as the result of the Union owned plant being opened.

President's Commission Learns About Farm Labor

Members of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor are apparently learning a lot about the problems of agricultural workers in the United States. Hearings have been held all over the country. Employers, government, social workers, labor and all elements concerned about the problem have been heard. Hearings are to end this month and a report to the President is to be made in December or January.

Among the questions unanswered by government officials in charge of recruiting labor and employers who hire workers is one that was posed by Dr. William Lieserson, a member of the Commission. Said Dr. Lieserson recently in Washington while questioning Don Larin, head of the U.S.E.S. Farm Placement Division, "Why should American farm workers work for less and under worse conditions than Mexican and Puerto Rican workers brought into this country to help harvest crops?" The same question has been asked by other members of the Commission repeatedly.

The answer of course is that the employers are organized and the employees are not. The result is that the employers can impose their own terms. The prevailing wage is left up to the organized farm operators.

The Commission also questioned the U. S. Employment Service official on the propriety of having a "Special Farm Labor Committee" composed of growers to determine the policy of this agency of Government. Larin replied by pointing out that the President of the National Farm Labor Union was invited to sit with the committee, but not as a full member with voting rights and recognition. Larin also claimed that the "Farm Labor Committee" was Advisory only. The Commission wanted to know why they didn't seek advice from all elements in agriculture as well as the big farm operators. There was no answer.

Inquiry or Inquest

Another investigation is being made of the problems of agricultural labor. This time it is being conducted by a subcommittee of the House of Representatives under the chairmanship of Congressman Stephen Pace of Georgia. Other members of the subcommittee are Congressmen Gathings of Arkansas, Poage of Texas, Hill of Colorado, and Bramblett of California. All are well known congressional stooges of the large scale corporation farmers and southern cotton planters.

This committee was appointed at the request of the big farm operators and is expected to offset the work of President Truman's Commission on Migratory Labor. Pace's committee will report to Congress soon after it reconvenes in late November.

The Farm Labor News has an inside track on what this Congressional Committee will recommend and can predict without fear of contradiction

Cotton Planters Warned Mexican Nationals Spread Pink Boll Worm

Pink Boll worms, insects that destroy cotton, have been found in Louisiana, according to the State Commissioner of Agriculture, W. E. Anderson. He reported cotton land in several Parishes to be infested and that such land must be taken out of cultivation. Meanwhile Texas agricultural authorities have issued warnings to all cotton producing states that the dreaded Pink Boll Worm may be spread by cotton pickers moving into the United States from Mexico. The Texans urged that pick sacks, clothing and suitcases of Mexican nationals be examined for evidence of the bug.

that Pace and his crowd will, among other things, make the following recommendations to Congress:

1. That there is a serious shortage of labor and we, the committee, recommend the setting aside of all immigration laws and regulations to permit the entry of not less than 400,000 Mexican nationals to engage in farm work during 1951, and in such numbers as may be needed thereafter.

2. That the foreign agricultural workers be imported under the same conditions as prevail among American workers: low wages, no guarantee of working conditions, no housing, health or medical care programs, and above all no requirement that employers post bond to insure the return of the foreign worker to his native land.

3. That the U. S. Employment Service be directed to facilitate the entry of Mexican nationals, British West Indians, and others from depressed areas, and that there be no government interference with such labor supplied the farmers who are trying to defeat communism by raising huge crops of cotton, sugar beets, fruits and vegetables at government guaranteed prices; that is, we recommend that Congress adopt legislation to provide our friends with plenty of cheap labor so that they can make huge profits as patriotic Americans.

4. That if the U.S.E.S. won't do as we like, the farm labor program shall be transferred to the Agricultural Extension Services of the Land Grant Colleges for the duration of the national defense emergency.

FARM LABOR NEWS

The Farm Labor News is published monthly by the National Farm Labor Union A.F. of L. Offices Room 825 Victor Bldg. 726 9th St., N. W., Washington 1, D. C.

Subscription rate 50c per year.

All members of the National Farm Labor Union are subscribers, payment for paper included in monthly dues.

Entered as a second class matter at the post office Washington D. C.

Statement of Ownership

Statement of the ownership, management, and circulation required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233)

Of Farm Labor News published monthly—1950 at Washington, D. C.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, National Farm Labor Union A.F. of L., 825 Victor Bldg., Washington, D. C.; Editor, H. L. Mitchell, 825 Victor Bldg., Washington, D. C.; Managing editor, None; Business manager, None.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)

National Farm Labor Union A. F. of L., 825 Victor Bldg., Washington, D. C. An unincorporated labor organization, principal officers are H. L. Mitchell, President, 825 Victor Bldg., Washington, D. C.; Dorothy Dowe, Secretary-Treasurer, 825 Victor Bldg., Washington, D. C.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (if there are none, so state.) None.

4. Paragraph 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semi-weekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

H. L. MITCHELL,
Editor.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 11th day of October, 1950. Roberta Stewart, Notary Public, District of Columbia. My Commission expires August 14, 1955.

Union Wins Tomato Strike

The Tracy Farm Labor Local 300 has won a hard fought battle to increase wages paid 3,500 tomato pickers in northern California. Wages were raised from 12c a box to 18c after a strike lasting over three weeks. The strike was directed against the labor contractors who contract to harvest crops for the growers for a fee and who pay their workers at the lowest rate possible. In addition the contractors operate labor camps, run commissaries where the workers are forced to trade, often maintain vice and gambling concessions to rob the workers of their pay.

The first move in the strike by the 20 odd contractors engaged in harvesting the crop was to evict the strikers from the camps and to recruit illegal aliens from Mexico known as "wetbacks." Over 700 Wets were brought in to pick tomatoes. Vice President Ernesto Galarza, who represented the Union throughout the strike, requested the U. S. Immigration Service to remove the illegal aliens. The authorities said they were too busy right then, but would look into the matter in a few weeks. Galarza reported this to the National Office in Washington. Members of Congress and other government officials were informed. President Galarza demanded action and Frank Edwards, A.F. of L. Commentator on Mutual Broadcasting System, told the story of the use of illegal aliens as strike breakers. Immigration officers found they were not so busy after all. U. S. officers moved in; the wets moved out in a hurry.

A hundred car caravan loaded with Union members began picketing the fields. Tomato canneries shut down. Some of the growers and a few contractors met the Union wage demand immediately. Pressure was brought on the others and wages started up. In some places they reached 20c a box, more than the Union demanded. The strike was called off.

Other officers and organizers assisting Galarza and the Tracy members were Vice President Hasiwar, Organizers Swearingen, Shelton, Estrada and others.

Union Supports Freedom Crusade

The active support of the Crusade for Freedom by the National Farm Labor Union of the American Federation of Labor was announced by William Becker, national representative of the Union at Bakersfield, Calif. Becker said the the Crusade's scrolls would be on hand at the Local Union meetings in this area so that members and visitors would have an opportunity to enroll by signing the Declaration of Freedom.

"The membership of the NFLU is unanimous in its opposition to communism and other forms of tyranny," declared Becker. "We are proud to enlist in this drive to bring democracy to the people behind the iron curtain."

News Briefs

"Di Giorgio Slaves Get Raise"

We see by the papers that "Ole" Joe Di Giorgio has at last given "his workers" a raise. All employees are to get a 10 per cent wage increase. No overtime will be paid, no call in time is mentioned. Di Giorgio "workers" are still forbidden to join a Union.

Child Labor Banned

The new Fair Labor Standards Act bans hiring children for wages on farms during school hours. The NFLU has sent out a leaflet to all local unions to be distributed among workers, farmers and employers, telling what the law provides.

Cotton Crop Short Wages Cut by Labor Imports

The Department of Agriculture on October 9 reports the smallest cotton crop since 1934. 9,869,000 bales are estimated for 1950. Production is down in nearly all states. Nearly a half million bales less than 1949 is being produced in Arkansas. California's crop is off by 400,000 bales. The work season is being cut to 4 or 5 weeks this year in these two states. Less labor is required, but the Employment Service is importing Mexicans to cut wages of the pickers down south.

AFL Convention Adopts NFLU Resolutions

The American Federation of Labor meeting in Convention at Houston, Texas, September 18 to 23, adopted resolutions proposed by delegates representing the National Farm Labor Union. These resolutions call for extension of social security to all farmers and farm workers, opposing importation of unneeded alien workers, collective bargaining and inclusion of small farmers under the National Bankruptcy Act. President Mitchell and Secretary Dowe represented the NFLU at the Houston Convention.

California Members To Vote Nov. 7

The Bakersfield Californian reports that over 5,000 new voters registered in Kern County during the registration campaign which began August 1 and ended September 14. The National Farm Labor Union accounted for nearly 2,000 of these new voters. Delphina Andrada, Secretary of the Bakersfield Local, led the field in number of new voters turned in by Official Registrars. Thousands of farm workers registered in other counties over the state during the same period.

Defense Manpower Commission Set Up in Labor Dept.

Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin has set up an Office of Defense Manpower to supply labor to defense industry and essential civilian employment. The order provides for a Management Labor Advisory Com-

Labor Blocks Raid On U.S. Treasury

The large scale farm operators who import Mexican nationals to take jobs of American citizens for once failed in an effort to raid the Treasury of the United States. Just before Congress recessed, the cotton planters' Senator, John McClelland of Arkansas, introduced a bill to refund to the corporation farmers the bond of \$25 they had to put up for each Mexican national who skipped his contract. From 10 to 25 per cent of all Mexican nationals who are imported for farm work fail to return to Mexico when their contracts expire. The employers are required to post bond. The government insisted they pay, so the Senator from Arkansas thought it was outrageous that his friends and cohorts had to make good as they had promised. McClelland's bill sailed through the Senate without much opposition.

When it was sent over to the House of Representatives, Congressman Jack Shelley of California found out what was up. Congressman Shelley notified the American Federation of Labor and the AFL Legislative Agents informed the Congressmen who are friends of labor. So now the Taxpayers won't have to bear the cost of the Mexicans who skipped their contracts. The big farmers will have to cough up—\$25 for each Mexican national who got left in the USA.

mittee composed of representatives of labor and management in both industry and agriculture.

Low Cost Homes Needed By Farm Workers, Says Farmer

Representatives of big farm owners appearing before the Governor's Commission on Agricultural Labor in Merced, California, recently urged that a program be worked out where farm workers could purchase homes of their own. Burt Ines said that 80 to 90 per cent of such workers were good credit risks, but they could not qualify for FHA Loans under the present law.

Cowboys Have Union

A recent article in the Nation Magazine tells about an organization of cowboys who perform at Rodeos throughout the country. The Association set wages and other conditions of employment for its members engaged in this dangerous occupation. The cowpunchers association is not affiliated with any labor organization.

Jewish Farmers in New Jersey

Nearly 30 years ago the Jewish Agricultural Society started a program for returning Jewish people to the land. Today there are over 1,000 farmers of the Jewish faith who are chicken farmers in the state of New Jersey. They have annual sales of 25 million dollars.

DAIRYMEN'S NEWS

New York Dairy Farmers Meet in Utica

Forty delegates representing the National Farm Labor Union locals composed of milk producers in New York State met in Utica on Sunday, October 8. L. N. Gregory, organizer, of Ellensburg Center, presided at the meeting.

Labor Leaders Speak

The first speaker of the day was Mr. Joe Shambro, Vice President of the State Federation of Labor, who welcomed the delegates to Utica. Brother Shambro gave an inspiring address and urged that all local unions of the NFLU affiliate with their State Federation and nearest central labor union.

Mr. Michael J. Walsh, regional director for the American Federation of Labor, whose offices are in Utica, had made the arrangements for the meeting at the Hotel Hamilton which made its Green Room available to the Union representatives. Both Walsh remained throughout the session giving the delegates the benefit of his advice and long experience in organizing work.

Judge Charles Solomon, State Representative of A.F. of L.'s Labor's League for Political Education, stirred the delegates with his highly educational talk on the history and background of the labor movement as well as his appeal for support of labor endorsed candidates for office.

Other visitors and speakers included Sam Talireco, representative of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Burt Heiman of the United Textile Workers A.F. of L.

President H. L. Mitchell of the National Farm Labor Union made the keynote address, pointing out the need for tightening up the organization and engaging in bargaining with distributors of the products of the labor of the Union's members. Mitchell also urged the Local Unions to join in with the Central Labor Unions and State Federation, pointing out the many advantages to be secured by affiliation.

Delegates Discuss Problems

Delegates from all of the locals took part in the general discussion, seeking advice and aid in their local problems. The Altoona Local delegates reported securing an increase in price from their distributor, following a conference with the management.

The Conference went on record instructing all local unions in New York State to begin immediately col-

Pennsylvania Governor Backs Union of Dairy Farmers

Donald J. MacDonald, Secretary-Treasurer of the Associated Milk Producers and Handlers Local No. 292, on September 11 conferred with the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Hon. James H. Duff.

MacDonald presented the program of his local union and that of the National Farm Labor Union to the Governor and the Secretary of Agriculture, Miles Horst, in Harrisburg. The Governor as well as the Secretary of Agriculture expressed full approval of the aims, purpose and plans of the Local Union. He was quite enthusiastic about the Union's plan to secure legislation to establish regional laboratories in four places in the state for diagnosis of livestock diseases. The Governor also expressed sympathy with the Union's plan for eliminating the milk classification system and securing a flat price for all products. Likewise, he approved the Union proposal for enforcement on a fair basis of Section 801 of the Milk Control Law.

MacDonald's visit with the Governor occurred on the same day the troop train wrecked in Ohio killing a large number of Pennsylvania National Guardsmen. MacDonald reported that although Governor Duff was greatly distressed by the accident, he gave full attention to the matters concerning the dairy farmers. The Governor dictated a memo to his Highway Commissioner instructing him to improve State Route 128 from West Sunbury to Muddy Creek.

Secretary MacDonald reported on this visit to Harrisburg at the regular union meeting in Butler the same date.

lecting the full initiation fee of \$2.00 from each dairy farmer who joined the Union after October 8.

The delegates adopted a resolution instructing each local union to begin negotiations with their distributors at an early date. Organizer Gregory and A.F. of L. director Walsh pledged to assist in such negotiations when called upon by the locals to do so. It was agreed that a model contract would be drafted for use by the Local Unions at an early date.

After much discussion it was finally agreed that there would be no change in the present local union structure, but that locals would expand their activities to take in as members all dairy farmers whose farms were convenient to the meeting place of the Local Union. The delegates rejected the idea for county wide organization and urged that, in the future, locals unions be set up where they will be of most service and most convenient to members.

Wis. - Minn. Dairy Unions Nearly 1,000 Strong

Beginning in late July the National Farm Labor Union began organizing small dairy farmers in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota. The first local to be chartered was near Superior, Wisconsin, and is known as Dairy Farmer Union Local No. 293. It covers the area of Douglas County, which has a potential membership of over 1,200 dairy farmers. 476 members were initiated into this Local Union as of October 1. There are 6 large milk plants in the area with whom the Union is engaged in negotiations for contracts.

Strike Won Contracts Signed

Early in August the Iron Range Dairy Farmers Local 297 was established in Minnesota. A strike against 11 milk plants was called which resulted in a settlement that won a 40c increase in the prices paid the farmers for the products of their labor. Contracts were signed with four distributors immediately, which provided union recognition and a guarantee on their markets for a full year. Seven other contracts are in the process of negotiation and are expected to be signed before the Farm Labor News reaches its readers. The Local Union has 271 members out of a possible 450 dairy farmers in the Iron Range area. As soon as crops are harvested it is expected that all will become members in good standing.

70 Out of 105 Dairy Farmers Join

On the 15th of August another Local Union was chartered at Grand Rapids, Minnesota, which has secured 70 members out of 105 dairy farmers in the area. A price increase from \$2.80 per 100 lbs. to \$4.10 has been secured and the Local is now negotiating contracts with the distributing plants operating in Grand Rapids. The companies involved state that they like to do business with the Union, and that the organization of the producers has brought stability to their business. Grand Rapids has for years been considered an anti-union town. However the National Farm Labor Union appears to have sold the townspeople on the idea that the A.F. of L. is good for the milk business.

New Local in Wisconsin Rapids

The latest addition to the growing ranks of the National Farm Labor Union among dairy farmers in this area is in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. A local has been chartered by a group of dairymen who heard about the organization through a reactionary farm journal who denounced the A.F. of L. for attempting to bring collective bargaining to dairy farm producers. These men knew that if the "Agriculturist" was against the Union, then the Union was a good

Farms Getting Less, Housewife Paying More For Milk Supply

Chicago. — The middleman makes more out of milk than the dairy farmer. The farmer's share is shrinking, and the middleman's share is growing. The housewife pays and pays.

That's what the Pure Milk Association, a co-op marketing and processing group here, pointed out to a Senate subcommittee investigating the spread in food prices.

Producers in this area, said the association, get 8 cents a quart for milk. The housewife pays 21½ cents. The processor gets the difference. What's more, the situation is getting worse. In 1946 the farmer got 8.92 cents a quart and the housewife paid 19.1 cents for home delivery. The spread was 10.18 cents. For the first eight months of 1950, the farmer got only 7.74 cents, and the housewife paid 21.1 cents. The processor got 13.36 cents. A Senate investigator should follow the milk from the cow to the doorstep to see the costs involved, PMA suggested.

New Jersey Local Protects Its Members

President Charles Barbay reports that the Knorr's Dairy which sold out of business recently caused the loss of a market for 20 producers who are members of the Union. President Barbay advises that all of the members of the Union had found a new market, with the exception of Walter Behrman, and that the Teamster Local Union 680 is making a special effort to place this member's products.

idea. So they organized and expect to be the largest local of dairy farmers in the two states before long. The officers and charter members of the Wisconsin Rapids Local are: Andrew E. Wolcott, President; Charles A. Wegner, Vice President; Edward David Griffiths, Secretary; Chester Lucas, Gorden F. Wolcott, Ervin Jensen, Lawrence C. Lee, Robert Joosten, William Sojka, Homer Winch, Forrest Fessler, and Raymond Lilley.

In organizing the dairy farmers in both Wisconsin and Minnesota the National Farm Labor Union has had the full cooperation of all organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Officers of the Teamsters Locals, the Central Labor Unions and the State Federation of Labor have been very helpful. Edwin C. Mitchell has represented the National Union in the organization work, and plans are now underway to station a full time organizer in the area to carry on the work.